

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for collecting and communicating information related to validity of a patent over a global information network, comprising:

- a) soliciting bounty hunters via a global information network for prior art related to validity of said patent;
- b) receiving substantive information related to said validity of said patent from at least one of said bounty hunters in response to said solicitation; and,
- c) sanitizing said substantive information.

2. The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of submitting said sanitized substantive information to a bounty offeror.

3. The method of Claim 2 further comprising the step of paying a bounty to one of said bounty hunters a bounty when said received substantive information meets specific requirements.

4. The method of Claim 2 wherein said specific requirements are specified by said bounty offeror.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein said sanitizing comprises removal of information related to publication of said substantive information.

6. The method of Claim 1 wherein said sanitizing comprises removal of information related to identity of the third party who submitted said substantive information.

7. The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of time-stamping submissions of bounty hunters in response to said solicitation to determine chronological order of receipt.

8. The method of Claim 1 further comprising the step of comparing at least two submissions of substantive information received in response to said solicitation to determine if substantive information received from one of said bounty hunters differs from substantive information received from another of said bounty hunters.

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9. The method of Claim 8 further comprising the step of submitting a plurality of sanitized substantive information disclosures to a bounty offeror when said comparison indicates that different substantive information has been received from at least two of said bounty hunters.

10 10. The method of Claim 9 further comprising the step of paying a bounty to at least one of said bounty hunters when certain requirements are met.

11. A method for brokering information between at least two parties over a global information network, comprising:

15 a) soliciting bounty hunters via a global information network for published information;

b) receiving said published information from at least one of said bounty hunters in response to said solicitation; and,

c) sanitizing said published information.

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12. The method of Claim 11 further comprising the step of submitting said sanitized published information to a bounty offeror.

13. The method of Claim 12 further comprising the step of paying one of said bounty hunters a bounty when said received substantive information meets specific requirements.

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14. The method of Claim 12 wherein said specific requirements are specified by said bounty offeror.

15. The method of Claim 11 wherein said sanitizing comprises removal of information related to publication of said substantive information.

5 16. The method of Claim 12 wherein said sanitizing comprises removal of information related to identity of the third party who submitted said substantive information.

17. The method of Claim 11 further comprising the step of time-stamping submissions of bounty hunters in response to said solicitation to determine chronological order of receipt.

10 18. The method of Claim 11 further comprising the step of comparing at least two submissions of substantive information received in response to said solicitation to determine if substantive information received from one of said bounty hunters differs from substantive information received from another of said bounty hunters.

15 19. The method of Claim 18 further comprising the step of submitting a plurality of sanitized substantive information disclosures to a bounty offeror when said comparison indicates that different substantive information has been received from at least two of said bounty hunters.

20 20. The method of Claim 19 further comprising the step of paying a bounty to at least one of said bounty hunters when certain requirements are met.

21. An apparatus for collecting and communicating information related to validity of a patent over a global information network, comprising:

25 a) means for soliciting bounty hunters via a global information network for prior art related to validity of said patent;

b) means for receiving substantive information related to said validity of said patent from at least one of said bounty hunters in response to said solicitation; and,

c) means for sanitizing said substantive information.

22. The apparatus recited in Claim 21 wherein said means for soliciting comprises a page on a web site.

23. The apparatus recited in Claim 21 wherein said means for receiving substantive information comprises e-mail.

24. The apparatus recited in Claim 21 wherein said means for sanitizing comprises a computer programmed to extract information related to publication of said substantive information.

25. The apparatus recited in Claim 21 wherein said means for sanitizing comprises a computer programmed to extract information related to source of said substantive information.

26. An apparatus for brokering information between at least two parties over a global information network, comprising:

a) means for soliciting bounty hunters via a global information network for published information;

b) means for receiving said published information from at least one of said bounty hunters in response to said solicitation; and,

c) means for sanitizing said published information.

27. The apparatus recited in Claim 26 wherein said means for soliciting comprises a page on a web site.

28. The apparatus recited in Claim 26 wherein said means for receiving substantive information comprises e-mail.

29. The apparatus recited in Claim 26 wherein said means for sanitizing comprises a computer programmed to extract information related to publication of said substantive information.

30. The apparatus recited in Claim 26 wherein said means for sanitizing comprises a computer programmed to extract information related to source of said substantive information.